

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A storage device comprising:

a processor;

5 a computer interface communicably connected to the processor to enable the processor to communicate with a computer;

a network interface communicably connected to the processor to enable the processor to communicate with a file server; and

10 a storage means communicably connected to the processor, wherein the computer may request a file from the processor and the processor either (1) provides the file to the computer if the file is cached on the storage means, (2) obtains the file from the file server if the file is available from the file server, caches the obtained file on the storage means, and provides the obtained file to the computer on a read-only basis, or (3) returns a file unavailable notice to the computer.

15 2. The storage device of claim 1, wherein the computer is communicably connected to a network server through the network interface.

3. The storage device of claim 1, wherein the storage means comprises random access media.

4. A computer network comprising

20 a file server;

a network server;

a computer communicably connected to the network server;

a storage device communicably connected to the computer and the file server, the storage device comprising a processor and a storage means, wherein the computer may request a file from the processor and the processor either (1) provides the file to the computer on a read-only basis if the file is cached on the storage means, (2) obtains the file from the file server if the file is available from the file server, caches the obtained file on the storage means, and provides the obtained file to the computer on a read-only basis, or (3) returns a file unavailable notice to the computer.

5 5. The computer network of claim 4, wherein the computer is communicably connected to the network server through the storage device.

10 6. The computer network of claim 4, wherein the storage means comprises random access media.

15 7. A method of providing a file to a computer comprising
receiving in a storage device a request from the computer for the file, the storage device including a storage means;

determining whether the file is cached on the storage means;
determining, if the file is not cached on the storage means, whether the file is available from a file server, and if the file is available from the file server, retrieving the file from the file server and caching the retrieved file on the storage means; and

20 providing to the computer the file on a read-only basis if the file is cached on the storage means.

8. The method of claim 5 further comprising providing to the computer a response indicating that the file is not available if the file is not cached on the storage means.

9. The method of claim 7 further comprising deleting the cached file from the storage means upon receiving a command from the file server to delete the cached file.

10. A method for providing updated files to a computer comprising:

providing to the computer, from a storage device, a list identifying a plurality of

5 files which the storage device may retrieve from a file server;

retrieving from the file server, with the storage device, a first file of the plurality of files when the computer communicates to the storage device a request for the first file;

caching within the storage device a copy of the first file that the computer may access on a read-only basis;

10 receiving at the storage device notice from the file server that an updated version of the first file exists on the file server, whereupon the cached copy of the first file is deleted.

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